

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 464 577

HE 034 922

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TITLE The Concept of Academic Politeness in a Multicultural University Classroom.
PUB DATE 2002-00-00
NOTE 50p.; Based on a Master of Arts Thesis, The Ohio State University, titled "A Qualitative Study: The Concept of Politeness in a Multicultural Classroom."
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Patterns; *Diversity (Student); *Graduate Students; Higher Education; Multicultural Education; Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Infrastructure; *Politeness

ABSTRACT

This study explored a context-embedded concept of politeness in a discussion-type, multicultural university classroom. The graduate-level class, Language Planning, had 33 students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Looking below the surface of specific classroom incidents, situated on the politeness-impoliteness continuum, the research identified seven infrastructures: (1) Contribution; (2) Relevance; (3) Authority; (4) Mind; (5) Turn-Taking; (6) Quantity; and (7) Demeanor. These infrastructures constantly and interactively create the dynamics of academic politeness. (Contains 5 endnotes and 27 references.) (Author/SLD)

ED 464 577

The Concept of Academic Politeness in a Multicultural University Classroom

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This paper is based on my MA thesis, A qualitative study: The concept of politeness in a multicultural classroom, submitted to The Ohio State University

Abstract

This study explores a context-embedded concept of politeness in a discussion-type, multicultural university classroom. Underneath specific classroom incidents, which are situated on the politeness-impoliteness continuum, the author recognizes seven infrastructures (Contribution, Relevance, Authority, Mind, Turn-Taking, Quantity, and Demeanor). These infrastructures constantly and interactively create the dynamics of academic politeness.

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1. Introduction

Since all verbal human communication entails linguistic politeness, this construct is a common area of intellectual inquiry among diverse social scientists. Linguistic politeness is the language usage realized through speakers' strategies to be accepted favorably by the addressee and through the speaker's choice of linguistic forms that are contextually appropriate in a given speech community (Ide, 1989). Linguistic politeness has two types: strategic politeness and social indexing (Kasper, 1990, 1992). In the former, interlocutors employ linguistic strategies to save and maintain "face" (Brown & Levinson, 1978), that is, their public self-image. In the latter, speakers use honorifics and formulaic speech that sociolinguistically indicate the social relationships between them.

Sociologists, linguists, applied linguists, developmental psychologists, psycholinguists, sociolinguists, social anthropologists, pragmaticists, and communication specialists have undertaken conceptual and empirical research in this field. A bibliography of approximately 1,000 journal articles and books dealing with linguistic politeness is available (See DuFon, Kasper, Takahashi, and Yoshinaga, 1994). The bibliography includes diverse areas of linguistic politeness such as the definitions and theories of politeness, the validity of a universal theory of politeness, the realizations of politeness in different cultural frameworks (Lakoff, 1989: Watts, Ide, & Ehlich, 1992), acquisition and comprehension of speech acts, honorifics, gender differences in politeness, and politeness in written texts and telephone conversations. The investigation of linguistic politeness should not be peripheral to these various disciplines because an understanding of this concept in language use

rests on different interdisciplinary approaches in the social sciences and adds much to the fields themselves.

Despite these diverse inquiries into linguistic politeness found in the bibliography, research on politeness in the classroom has been meager. One exception is White (1989), who set out to describe the ways polite discourse in the classroom created and restrained certain types of knowledge that the teacher and students constructed in kindergarten through sixth grade classes. She provided a sociolinguistic explanation by analyzing the classroom discourse. To analyze the data, she used Brown and Levinson's (1978) positive politeness strategies (See Related Literature below), such as "includ(ing) both speaker and hearer in the activity" or "avoid(ing) disagreement" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 107). White (1989) claimed that the "norm of politeness ... (did) not encourage them (the students) to ask questions or see knowledge as problematic" (p. 306). The use of positive strategies, continually asking what-questions, and maintaining a constant cheerfulness did not create the kinds of challenging contexts that would have involved the teacher's provocative questions and the student's critical thinking. One of the fundamental assumptions in White's study was that Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) framework of politeness was applicable to classroom settings.

We naively tend to assume that the characteristic, rules, maxims and strategies of politeness, as proposed by Fraser and Nolen (1981), Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), operate in all verbal human communication (See Related Literature below) and that these regulative devices of politeness are, therefore, applicable to any situation. The politeness theory of Brown and Levinson has guided White's (1989) study in the classroom. This fact, however,

does not necessarily mean that this framework defines the concept of politeness in the classroom; it merely means that the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson is one of the politeness frameworks that can be applied to some aspects of human communication in the classroom. Their framework is not the definitive context-embedded concept of the classroom.

In fact, the classroom setting is unique. Linguistic, psychological and sociological structures of the classroom show distinct patterns that disclose asymmetrical configurations between the teacher and the students. Sociolinguistically, classroom discourse reveals the "transmission mode of education," — the traditional idea that the teacher's primary job in the classroom is to distribute knowledge to the students, who passively receive it. This discourse pattern is characterized by Teacher Initiation — Student Response — Teacher Evaluation. This classroom discourse indicates an asymmetrical relationship between those who know and those who do not. The classroom also has "participation structures," that is, the teacher's and the students' rights and obligations in terms of who can say what and when (Philips, 1983). The teacher has the right to speak at any time to any student; on the other hand, the students must speak at an appropriate time about relevant topics in an expected manner (Cazden, 1988). Moreover, the classroom has agreed-upon purposes: teaching and learning.

For these distinctive features of the classroom, it would come as no surprise if the concepts of politeness were context-bound. Yet no empirical research has attempted to investigate the concepts of politeness in the classroom. At present, we hardly understand the nature of the concept of politeness, or the processes of politeness dynamics in the classroom. What are the context-specific concepts of

politeness in the classroom? How are they realized? Why do the concepts of politeness work the way they do in the classroom? How do the concepts shape the ways the teacher and the students behave? How do the concepts affect classroom interactions? How do the teacher and the students perceive others and classroom incidents when it comes to politeness? Obviously, we first need research studies that would provide insight into the context-specific aspects of politeness in the classroom. Without clarifying the context-specific concepts of politeness in the classroom, a better picture of classroom dynamics will not emerge. Nor will the whole picture of politeness be revealed since politeness in the classroom is a forgotten, but important, part of the total spectrum of politeness. The purpose of this article is, then, to propose a context-embedded concept of *academic politeness* in a discussion-type, graduate-level, multicultural classroom.

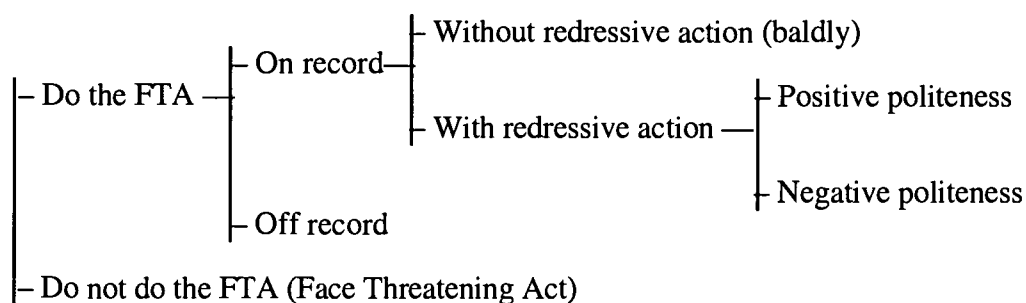
2. Related Literature: Theories of Linguistic Politeness

Some researchers have suggested regulative devices of linguistic politeness. Fraser and Nolen (1981) characterized politeness as the negotiation between interlocutors. When interlocutors communicate with each other, they possess certain norms, including their rights and obligations. These norms, along with some situationally established norms, shape and determine the processes of communication. Lakoff (1973) presents a second regulative device of politeness. Lakoff claims that three rules of politeness exist (Do not impose; Give options; Make an addressee feel good) and that these rules are appropriate for different relationships in power and status between interlocutors. Leech (1983) provides a third regulative device of politeness; he maintains that six maxims operate in politeness: Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy. The

Tact Maxim, for example, states that the more beneficial to others expressions are, the more polite they are; the more expressions cost others, the less polite they are.

Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness (See Figure 1) has been useful to guide many research studies. They argue that speakers employ positive and negative politeness strategies to maintain their face (i.e., public self-image). Positive politeness strategies are concerned with the positive self-image of hearers. Speakers attempt to maximize the hearers' wants by exaggerating interest and sympathy with the hearers, avoiding disagreement, including both the speaker and the hearers in the activity, and giving reasons for actions. On the other hand, negative politeness strategies are concerned with the negative face of the hearer. Speakers attempt to avoid invading the hearers' personal territory and interfering with their freedom of action. Speakers may be conventionally indirect, be pessimistic, minimize the imposition, and apologize. As opposed to general contexts to which these four regulative devices may be applied, this study investigated a concept of politeness in a specific contexts.

Figure 1. A politeness theory



Source: Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987

3. The Setting and Informants

The author conducted this research study in a discussion-type, multicultural classroom at a large Mid-Western university in the United States. The graduate-level class, *Language Planning*, for this study had 33 students, composed of 1 Ph.D. and 32 Master degree students (6 males and 27 females).¹ The participants were 13 Americans, 8 Taiwanese, 5 Japanese, and 7 miscellaneous cultural backgrounds (German, Greek, Israeli, Korean, Peruvian, Venezuelan, and Zairian). They were assigned at random the numbers from 1 to 33, along with S, which stood for student. The instructor of the class Prof. Z was a 33-year old Caucasian American woman. At the time of this study, she was a visiting assistant professor and had taught various courses in Foreign and Second Language Education at this university for three years.

4. Data Collection

I collected the data over a period of 10 weeks and the data derived from 12 different sources:

(1) Seven types of artifacts

(e.g., the course syllabus, course evaluation sheets and other handouts).

(2) Observer's fieldnotes

I observed ten sessions of the class, each session lasting for two and one half hours once a week, and kept fieldnotes about classroom interactions.

(3) Audio- and video- taping of classes

I videotaped eight of the ten sessions, while one of the students in the class tape-recorded all of the sessions as a back-up for the videos.

(4) Audiotaped interviews with the instructor

Audiotaping the conversations, I interviewed Prof. Z six times for approximately 30 to 40 minutes in her office.

(5) Audiotaped interviews with the students

I chose 16 interviewees out of the 33 students in the classroom. The 16 students interviewees consisted of four Americans, four Taiwanese, four Japanese and four other different cultural backgrounds (German, Israeli, Venezuelan and Zairian). In my attempt to understand different points of view on classroom interactions, I not only selected informants who had the most oral participation, but also those who, in some cases, had the least. The first interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes, employing "standardized open-ended" (Patton, 1990, p. 280) questions that allowed me to ask each informant the same carefully worded questions. The second interviews lasted approximately 50 to 70 minutes.

(6) The Focus Group Interviews

American group (six informants), Japanese group (five informants) and Chinese group (six informants) had discussions at separate occasions. The data for the Chinese group were unusable because the recording equipment failed.

(7) A questionnaire

The questionnaire was composed of three open-ended questions and collected from 33 students.

(8) A reaction paper

Seven informants wrote a reaction paper in which, they responded to four open-ended questions about four sessions. Six students out of the seven informants for the reaction papers were non-interviewees.

(9) Reflections on video play-backs

In the third interview with Prof. Z and the three Focus Group Interviews, the informants commented on two segments of classroom interactions that had been video-recorded and played back for them.

(10) The instructor's notes

Prof. Z took notes in the 8th and 9th sessions. This method assisted Prof. Z in recalling specific classroom incidents when I asked her some questions about classroom (im)politeness during subsequent interviews.

(11) A self-reflection questionnaire

In the 10th session, 32 students took a self-reflection questionnaire, consisting of four open-ended questions about politeness in oral participation in this multicultural classroom.

(12) Informant-Expressed Semantic Relationship (Spradley, 1979) statements about politeness in class participation (See the Data Analysis section in detail). The purpose of this instrument was for the participants systematically to examine and confirm the concepts of politeness provided by other participants.

5. Data Analysis

Coding System

To develop "coding categories," we search for patterns and topics, creating certain phrases to represent them (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I developed a coding system without the assistance of the informants after completing the three interviews with Prof. Z and the first interview with the 16 interviewees. Many of the categorical names developed showed up directly from the interviews and the questionnaire; the rest of them were my own phrasing. Thirty-three coding categories were developed and used to organize the data (e.g., interviews, The Focus Group Interviews, reaction

papers). Some examples of coding categories were Respecting Different Ideas [RDI], Interruption [IR], Personal Experience [PE], Overdominance (Taking Too Much Time to Speak) [OD], and Contribution to the Class [CC].

Informant-Expressed Semantic Relationship Statements

One of the nine semantic relational concepts, which were proposed by Casagrande and Hale (1967), is *X is a kind of Y*. Based on this semantic relationship statement, I created 34 “Informant-Expressed Semantic Relationship” (Spradley, 1979) statements about politeness for class participation. To create the statements, I directly or indirectly quoted the included terms (*X* is the included term in *X is a kind of Y*) from interviews, the questionnaire, reaction papers, and the Focus Group Interviews. An example is “Not to correct teachers' mistakes during classroom interactions is a kind of politeness.”² I also asked a few interviewees for assistance in appropriately phrasing statements so that the statements would reflect the participants' intentions. Although I initially created 34 statements about classroom behaviors, 29 out of 34 statements were found to be situated in the politeness-impoliteness continuum.

Thematic Analysis

Descriptive ethnography is a theme-hunting game. Themes, which explain regulative human behaviors, are concepts or theories grounded on data in qualitative research. I categorized the statements [1] to [34] into themes, excluding statements [3], [7], [29], [32] and [33] that were found to go beyond the (im)politeness continuum.

6. Findings and Discussion

The investigation of politeness in the multicultural classroom operates on two plains: superstructures and infrastructures.³ On the surface, the concepts of politeness in this multicultural classroom appear holistic, extensive, multifaceted, and situation-bound. They are holistic because they include specific incidents, the teacher and the 33 students, and their perceptions of the incidents. The concepts of politeness cannot be understood without examining the whole aspects involved in this multicultural classroom. Since the concepts of politeness are not simply concerned with one-to-one communication, but with all the activities in this classroom, they are extensive. They specifically encompass: attendance; doing reading assignments; overparticipation; active listening; bidding; interruptions; private conversations; consideration of a variety of participants' backgrounds, ideas, teaching agendas and teacher's status; disagreements with the instructor and other students; dealing with the teacher's mistakes and students' incorrect answers; and instructor's ways of interacting with students. The students' concepts of politeness are also multifaceted. Although the participants reached a consensus about the politeness of some classroom behaviors, such as active listening, their opinions and reasoning were diverse on the whole. This was due to their culturally and personally established values. A dialectical conflict between the international students' sense of values in their own countries and their sense of values in the U.S. created their concepts of politeness in this multicultural classroom. The participants' concepts of politeness are situation-bound as well. Their cultural socialization and personal experiences have created their values, including their sense of politeness. Their concepts of politeness are internally consistent as a result of this self-education. In

other words, the participants can articulate their values of politeness without contradiction. However, this does not mean that their values are fixed; instead, their concepts of politeness are situationally flexible. The participants consider many factors to judge the (im)politeness of classroom incidents, including: people, time, teaching styles, teaching agendas, the topic in question, and the participants' backgrounds and opinions. On the surface, implicit codes of politeness are embodied in specific incidents, which are presented here as superstructures. The classroom incidents are an observable part of the dynamic structure of politeness. These superstructures are not exhaustive, but merely typical of this classroom.

Underneath these superstructures, seven infrastructures exist: Contribution, Relevance, Authority, Mind, Turn-Taking, Quantity, and Demeanor. These infrastructures are invisible but firm foundations of the structure of politeness, undergirding the superstructures (hereafter called SSs). The norms of politeness in the classroom are embedded in the infrastructures (hereafter called ISs). These seven ISs can partially explain any classroom incident with regard to politeness.

- (1) Contribution means the teacher's and the students' acts that contribute to substantive learning in the classroom.
- (2) Relevance refers to the connection between what the students are talking about and what is being discussed in the classroom.
- (3) Authority refers to the teacher's institutionally endowed power, both implicit and explicit, that allows them to manage the classroom, grade students, and facilitate discussions.
- (4) Mind denotes the teacher's academically justified power, including his or her professional knowledge, ability to think, experiences, and competence.

- (5) Turn-Taking indicates the ways students start talking, like bidding.
- (6) Quantity means the amount of time (length and frequency) the students talk in the classroom.
- (7) Demeanor refers to the participants' acts during the dynamic, interdependent, and negotiating processes of communication. Demeanor includes interjections, offense to a culture or a person, private conversations, active listening, and eye contact.

These concepts overlap with one another in concepts of (im)politeness. For instance, the line was conceptually drawn between Authority and Mind. The former refers to teachers' institutionally endowed power, and the latter refers to power derived from professional knowledge, ability to think, experiences, and competence. Although both describe the nature of the political, asymmetrical relationship that exists between the instructor and the students, the reality is that the students are not always conscious of determining which power has a greater effect on the way they think and behave in the classroom. A conceptual line was also drawn between Contribution and Relevance, yet both ISs refer to processes that the teacher and the students negotiate and construct knowledge in the classroom. Turn-Taking treats the issue of *how* the students *start* speaking, and Quantity deals with the issue of *how much* the students talk. Demeanor treats the whole issue of *how* the teacher and the students communicate verbally and non-verbally.

Referring to both SSs and ISs, the next section will discuss (im)politeness in this multicultural classroom by using the following format: (1) An IS in a heading (in the order of Contribution, Relevance, Authority, Mind, Turn-Taking, Quantity, and Demeanor), (2) Some SSs in a square, (3) The definition of the IS, (4) The

reasons these SSs are in this category, (4) A SS to represent this category, (5) A summary of the findings for the SS, and (6) Specific incidents that occurred in the classroom.

Contribution

- [17] "Avoiding disagreements with other students" is a kind of politeness.
- [22] "Respecting different ideas" is a kind of politeness. Please define ⁴ "Respecting different ideas."
- [23] "Making some comments to prevent instructors from accomplishing their teaching agendas" is a kind of impoliteness (S26INT1: 198–210: CK).⁵
- [24] "Contributing to the class" is a kind of politeness. Please define "Contributing to the class."
- [25] "Taking an active part in the conversation (classroom discussion) is being polite (to Prof. Z) as compared to sitting there and saying nothing" (S15QUE: 9–10: CC).
- [26] "Attending classes" is a kind of politeness.
- [27] "Doing the readings before classes" is a kind of politeness.

Contribution means the teacher's and the students' acts that contribute to substantive learning in the classroom. It covers SSs [17], [22], [23], [24], [25], [26] and [27]. Having rational disagreements in SS [17] and "Respecting different ideas," in SS [22] are important conditions for contribution in class. This is because the exchange of different opinions is critical to learning in discussion-type classes. SS [23] was found to be impolite because of its negative effect in achieving the purpose of class, namely, the construction of knowledge. SS [24] is clearly in this

category because this SS deals with contribution to the class. SSs [26] and [27] are both in this category because attendance and doing readings are fundamental and critical steps to ensure contribution in class. SS [25] compares "taking an active part in the conversation (classroom discussion)" with "sitting there and saying nothing."

SS [25]: "Taking an active part in the conversation (classroom discussion) is being polite (to Prof. Z) as compared to sitting there and saying nothing"

(S15QUE: 9–10: CC).

[11 agreements — 11 disagreements]

Agree: S8, S9, S11, S15, S16, S17, S22, S24, S26, Prof. Z, The researcher

Disagree: S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S10, S12, S14, S21, S28, S33

Positioning myself as a participant in the classroom, I initially responded to this statement with assurance, "Sure!" However, it turned out to be only my perspective and possibly my bias. This statement about politeness was interestingly provocative, the interview process for this SS was unexpectedly exciting, and the results were even surprising.

S8 clarified some definitions discussed in one of the textbooks. S5 shared her personal experiences, to which S32 responded. S24 raised some issues for discussion while S16 asked questions about what she did not understand. S4 and S22 talked about language policies in their countries. These were all aspects of students' active verbal participation. By way of contrast, some students listened to Prof. Z and the others students. While S3 listened without moving his body, S2 and S33 nodded their heads and smiled. S1 and S20 listened by opening their bodies towards the person who was talking, whereas S13 listened by putting her head down. S9 described herself when she listened: "I follow what the teacher is saying.

Does that make sense? ... My response ... in my mind, I would be saying, 'Yes! No!' You know. 'What is this?' You know" (S9INT1: 10–11 & 18–20: AL). These were all aspects of students' active nonverbal participation.

S9, S16 and S24 stressed Prof. Z's numerous, explicit requirements that the students be orally involved in the classroom. Referring to these requests, S16 said, "It's being polite because it's doing what Dr. Z has asked. It's fulfilling her request.... She [Dr. Z] wants us to talk" (S16INT2: 20–24: CP). While S16 seemed to view politeness as exocentric, S6 appeared to have an egocentric notion of politeness. Acknowledging the importance of active participation, S6 nonetheless mentioned that the above statement did not make sense to her. S6 explained: "If you say (this is) being polite to Dr. Z, (then it) sounds like to me we are participating (in) the conversation for her [Dr. Z], but we are participating (in) the conversation for ourselves to gain knowledge, you know, or express our ideas" (S6INT2: 20–23: CK).

S2 and S10 took the side of the listeners. They perceived that some people talked for the sake of talking "because there (was) so much pressure to speak" (S10FGI1: 133: CP) in the classroom. S1, who is usually reserved and quiet in the classroom, articulated that she was the type of person who, if she had something to say, said it. Like S33, S1 is a strong advocate of active listening. S1 remarked, "Ah, I [S1] think you can take an active part in a conversation by not saying anything" (S1INT2: 27–28: CP) through nodding, facial expressions and active listening. Even if this holds true, S11 and S22 viewed the classroom as a two-way interactive process: "By being active, you share your knowledge and opinions.... You are giving and also receiving" (S11INT2: 27–28: CC).

The students made various arguments in favor of "taking an active part in the discussion" or "sitting there and saying nothing." These multiple perspectives construct different social realities in the classroom. Although we usually realize only observable phenomena in the classroom, a critical aspect of classroom realities is the teacher's and students' perspectives, which provide endless and fascinating food for thought. Let me conclude this section with S5's comment:

If we have only people who participate, then it might not be a class, because people who participate try to talk all the time. O. K. And if we have only people who don't participate, ... then probably we will have (a) class that is dead. (S5INT1: 60–63: CP)

Relevance

- [8] "Talking about something irrelevant to the topic we are talking about" is a kind of impoliteness.
- [9] "Talking about personal experiences" is a kind of impoliteness.

Relevance refers to the connection between what we talk about and what is being discussed in the classroom. It covers SSs [8] and [9]. SS [8] obviously involves the issue of relevance. SS [9] is in this category because the participants agreed that relevance to the topic being discussed plays a key role in whether sharing personal experiences is perceived as polite or impolite. This section has the title, "Showing Part of Yourself."

SS [9]: "Talking about personal experiences" is a kind of impoliteness.

"Showing Part of Yourself" (S1INT2: 149–150: PE)

S16 complained:

She [S5] tells too much personal experience. I [S16] don't want to hear her personal experience. Or, I want to hear just a bit of her personal experience. It's boring (S16INT1: 9–11 & 43: PE). I'm not there to study her [S5] personal experiences (S16INT2: 4: PE). I think much of her personal experience is irrelevant (S16INT2: 7: PE).

S27 observed:

S32 and S5 love to talk about their experiences. Finally, they just go (in some other way).... Frequently, we can see some of the people at the other side of the classroom get frustrated and say something (like), "No, it's not the point we are talking about!" (S27FGI2: 38–43: PE)

S7 complimented:

She [S5] is great. I [S7] mean she brings a lot to the table. She brings a lot of her, you know, experiences. So I find it very interesting. I don't find it rude because I'm interested in what she has to say. (S7FGI1: 22–25: PE)

Should we welcome or reject talking about and listening to someone else's personal experiences? Seventeen interviewees (16 students and Prof. Z) shared a common idea that relevance is the key issue in response to SS [9]. As long as personal experiences are relevant to the topic in question, they "are very useful, sometimes rich information, probably richer than theories in the textbooks" (S33INT2: 92–94: PE) even though they "could be boring" (S5INT2: 109: PE). Talking about personal experiences is "a polite and respectful way of contribution" by "showing part of yourself" (S1INT2: 149–150: PE).

Then, who determines the scope of relevance? I have observed the class and found that, although the teacher has power to determine the scope of relevance in the class, the teacher's one-sided imposition of relevance on the students does not seem to create meaningful classroom interactions. Relevance is a particularly strong concept that can often discourage students' active involvement. Even if a teacher thinks a classroom incidents relevant, once some students perceive it as irrelevant to the topic in question, they mentally disengage from classroom activities. The classroom must be a site of negotiation between teacher and students.

Authority

- [14] "A student has been talking too long and the instructor stops the student's talking explicitly." This is a kind of politeness.
- [31] "The instructor controls a student who is dominating the discussion" (S8QUE: 10–11: OD). This is a kind of politeness.

Authority implies that teachers are institutionally endowed with both implicit and explicit power in a way that allows them to manage the classroom, grade students, facilitate discussions, etc. Authority covers SSs [14] and [31], both of which describe the instructor's authoritative power to control students' behaviors.

SS [14]: "A student has been talking too long and the instructor stops the student's talking explicitly." This is a kind of politeness.

The overall findings suggest that when a student has been talking too long and the instructor explicitly stops the student's turn, it is impolite to the student who is talking. It is, however, polite to the whole class. The episode entitled "A Speechless Hubbub" demonstrates this finding.

A Speechless Hubbub

The seventh session was being wrapped up after no break. "S6, your answers were good." said Prof. Z, after asking S6 to talk about her written response to a discussion question. S6 then talked about the ambiguous concept of "internationalization." In response to S6's account of the concept, S14 began talking: "Yeah, I'd like to explain. I think, ah, internationalization, ah, that means, ah, to help a person to be, ah, to be educated with (an) international outlook and the tool for him or her, this ability to understand more about his world is, ah, through world communicative language." S14 talked for 6 minutes and 10 seconds. Finally, S6 raised her hand and Dr. Z acknowledged S6. Then, S6 interrupted S14, who did not realize it.

As soon as S14 started talking, a speechless hubbub crept into the classroom. S5 looked at the time on her watch, stood up and left the room. At the same time, S22 wrote something down on a small piece of white paper. His neighbor, S28, was watching S22 writing something down. S22, laughing, gave it to S28, who then read it and slightly nodded three times, smiling. After S28 wrote something else down on the paper, S22 took the paper back from S28. Meanwhile, S17 and S18 whispered to each other without listening to S14 and exchanged notes. S8, S20 and S25, facing towards her, looked at S14, who went on talking. S22 and S30 started talking to each other. S7 looked down at the desk and began putting something down on a piece of paper. S26, crossing his arms, had a blank expression on his face. S9 and S10 began talking to each other. S5 came back from outside, took a seat and looked at S14. S24 put his head down on the desk. S8 was flipping through papers on the

desk. S26 wrote something down on a piece of paper and gave it to S22. This speechless hubbub took over the classroom for 6 minutes and 10 seconds.

S28 articulated her thoughts about this incident.

S28: I was not interested in (it) any longer. It's was just too long. I'm sure no one responded.

S10: I turned it off.

S28: I was too tired to be polite to pretend to follow. I was lost. I think there is a certain responsibility on the part of speaker to not speak too long to take polite turns so that the others are not exhausted by turning to follow. At that time, she [S14] was irresponsible in giving (a) message that was too long and incomprehensible. And I simply (did) not have patience or energy to follow (it).

The researcher: You said, "Too tired to be polite." What do you mean by polite in this context?

S28: Polite in this context would be to pretend to understand or be interested, even though I (wasn't), which is what I ordinarily do.(FGI1: 69–81: OD)

S14 was usually quiet and supposedly it took courage for her to speak. S14 later reflected on herself and said, "I was lost. I talked too much, too long. Because I was weak and tired that day. I couldn't control (myself) well" (S14INT2: 34–35: OD). Against this self-negation, S16, showing her understanding personality, saw the incident with admiration. S16 said, "It seem(ed) like she [S14] was struggling to talk and I [S16] kind of admired (her for) talking" (S16INT2: 68–69: CP).

During 6 minutes and 10 seconds, Prof. Z was in a state of conflict, whether to engage in her customary and tenacious attempt to encourage the students to talk

or cut her off either implicitly or explicitly. "I [Prof. Z] remember sitting on the edge of my seat, kind of trying to figure out a way to take a turn because she [S14] was losing the rest of the class. The points were no longer being assimilated or listened to" (Z3: 4-7: OD). While most of the students in the classroom were minding their own business, S13 was putting herself in Prof. Z's shoes. S13 commented, "She [Prof. Z] is encouraging everybody to contribute and if she shoots her [S14] down, then, what kind of message would she [Prof. Z] be sending? So she [Prof. Z] was not in a position to interrupt" (S13FGI1: 94-97: CC).

At the time of this incident, most of the students were rushed into playing a game of impoliteness against their will. While S14 was impolite "in giving (a) message that was too long and incomprehensible" (S28FGI1: 75-76: OD), the rest of the students were also impolite in totally disengaging themselves from the classroom activity; however, they were not in a position to say, "You are talking too much. Shut up!" (S8INT2: 116-117: OD). This probably holds true even if a student said it in a polite manner because the act would plunge the person who said it from impoliteness into rudeness. This situation puts people in a quagmire of impoliteness; the more they struggle, the deeper they are sucked into it.

Interestingly enough, while the students were *externally* playing a game of impoliteness, they were at the same time *internally* playing a game of politeness.

S11: S14 made a long speech, 15-minute speech. That's too long. That's improper.

The researcher: O. K. Why didn't you say so (in the classroom)?

S11: Because I'm a polite person. (S11INT2: 3-4 & 9-10: OD)

If someone explicitly tried to stop S14's speaking turn, it would likely be interpreted as rude. The rest of the students were being polite without confronting the reality. In most of the cases, students are not in a position to stop the person who is talking too long.

S13 made sense when she articulated that Prof. Z should not interrupt S14; Prof. Z was experiencing a painful mental conflict. Yet, at the same time, Prof. Z alone was in a position to interrupt S14. This paradox often permeates the role of the teacher as the major social actor in the classroom. Since tacit norms in the classroom would justify the instructor's actions, Prof. Z's interruption would escape students' notice as long as it was done within an academic atmosphere, even if it was not necessarily tactful. If Prof. Z stops a student's turn for the sake of learning for the whole class, this action is often regarded as polite.

The researcher: O. K. Why didn't you stop it (S14's floor)?"

Prof. Z: I tried non-verbally. I felt it would be too impolite to stop her abruptly.

The researcher: Why?

Prof. Z: Because I couldn't think of a good way of doing so. You know, the only thing I could think of would be to abrupt, "That's an interesting point, let move on." or "O. K. Someone else wants to add to that." I tried to make eye contact with her and I tried to get her to sort of see there is another student who wants to respond to her. I think there was another student back by her. I wanted to say something, sort of paralinguistic things, you know, I kind of shifted my chair very close to the desk. I tried to indicate that I was ready to move on, but she didn't really pick up any

of those clues. I think it's important not to discourage them from taking a turn by cutting them off. I think that was the only time I can remember in this class I may have been justified, I should have done it.

The researcher: You think you should have done it?

Prof. Z: Ah, if I could have found a nice way of, a polite way of doing it, I would have done it. (Z4: 10 & 15–30: IR)

Mind

- [15] "Respecting teachers" is a kind of politeness. Please define "Respecting teachers."
- [16] "Not correcting teachers' mistakes during classroom interactions" is a kind of politeness.
- [18] "Avoiding disagreements with instructors" is a kind of politeness.
- [19] "Challenging instructors" is a kind of impoliteness. Please define "Challenging instructors."

Mind denotes the teacher's academically justified power, including his or her professional knowledge and experiences. It covers SSs [15], [16], [18] and [19]. SS [15] is categorized here. The main reasons students respect teachers are their professional knowledge, competence and experience. SSs [16], [18] and [19] are concerned with the conflict between the teacher's and the students' Mind, such as their knowledge and critical thinking. Specifically, SS [16], "Not correcting teachers' mistakes during classroom interactions," deals with their knowledge. Both SSs [18] and [19] treat the teacher's and the students' different opinions.

SS [18]: "Avoiding disagreements with instructors" is a kind of politeness.

In response to SS [18], the overall findings suggest that avoiding disagreements is not polite at all. Rational disagreements are welcomed. S5 said that avoiding disagreements with instructors is "hypocrisy" (S5INT2: 70: DIS). Individuals think differently, and disagreements — whether they are with instructors or other students — provide food for thought, leading to the construction of knowledge. "Avoiding disagreements is not a right attitude towards learning" (S9INT2: 28–29: DIS), and as long as a person logically supports his or her opinions, disagreements should be welcomed. While S24 admitted that it was fine to disagree with other students and the instructor, he actually avoids disagreeing in this classroom. He said, "I [S24] try to avoid emotional antagonism. And a lot of times I find people are expressing opinions. So there is really nothing logical to argue against" (S24INT2: 42–43: DIS).

Turn-Taking

- [1] "Not raising one's hand to say something in class" is a kind of impoliteness.
- [2] "Interrupting when someone is talking" is a kind of impoliteness.
- [13] "Without considering their personal learning styles, the instructor calls upon students at random to make them talk." This is a kind of impoliteness.
- [30] "Starting to talk without verbal or nonverbal consent from the instructor" is a kind of impoliteness.

Turn-Taking means the ways the students start talking. It covers SSs [1], [2], [13] and [30]. SS [13] describes a direct nomination. SSs [1], [2] and [30] define self-selections without bidding for a turn. "Bidding refers to the behaviors by which

students signal to the teacher that they wish to speak — hand-raising, eye contact, an in-breath, etc." (Allwright & Bailey, 1991, p. 133).

SS [1]: "Not raising one's hand to say something in class" is a kind of impoliteness.

The overall findings for this SS suggest that raising one's hand is polite and that not raising one's hand is impolite. However, the students in this multicultural classroom did not have to raise their hands.

Throughout the 10 sessions, S24 always raised his hand, whereas S5 never did. Because we think and behave as a result of socialization, I asked S24 and S5 about raising their hands before saying something in the classroom.

The researcher: Can I ask why you raise your hand?

S24: Ah, just, I think, to me, that's my understanding of courtesy.

(S24INT1: 108–109: RH)

S5: I don't think to be polite is to raise my hands. I think to be polite is to show myself in terms of what the others have spoken. (S5INT1: 171–172: RH)

Any classroom reality is constructed as a result of intricate and tacit negotiations between a teacher and students, both of whom bring with them a variety of backgrounds. This holds particularly true in the multicultural classroom since it is a complex web of multiple cultures. This class in particular is a melting pot of ten nationalities. Raising hands to say something in the class seems to be strongly influenced by the norms with which students have been socialized. As noted above, S24 understood raising his hand as "courtesy" (S24INT1: 108–109: RH), whereas S5 articulated that one of her definitions of politeness was immediate and spontaneous responses to others' opinions.

The teacher implicitly allowed latitude in the way the students could behave in the classroom. Prof. Z told me during an interview that she supposed some of the students' definitions of politeness were to raise their hands but that she was trying to get away from it. Prof. Z said, "They [students] see me [Prof. Z] as a control. I'm running this discussion so they've got to, ah, talk to me, interact with me, not necessarily other students in the class. I try to rip it down a little bit" (Z2: 172–175: RH).

Keeping this idea in mind, Prof. Z explicitly set the norm in this classroom: Students could jump into discussions. At the end of the sixth session, Prof. Z told the students, "Ah, you don't necessarily have to wait until I call on you, like S25 really had a good comment. You jumped right in when we were talking. I know that's really hard to do, but I really don't mind that. Ah, some of you are getting better than others. If you have a real comment to make, you know, take a turn. That's fine. You don't necessarily have to wait for the cues." In the sixth interview with Prof. Z, she was happy about the fact that the students, without necessarily raising their hands, started interacting with each other "as if they (were) having conversation over coffee about linguistic imperialism" (Z6: 96–97: RH). She said that spontaneous contribution was as polite as raising their hands before starting to talk.

Despite Prof. Z's attempt at breaking the hand-raising rule, the vast majority of interviewees was still in favor of this accustomed norm. Even though S19 knew that Prof. Z told the students that they did not have to raise their hands, S19 regarded S5, who always started talking without raising her hand, as "rude" (S19REA8: 7: RH) because S5's self-selection did not give the others sufficient opportunities to speak. S6 said that it was very difficult for her to get into discussions because 33 students

were present in the classroom. If S6 raises her hand and Prof. Z acknowledges her, it was easier for her to say something because S6 grew up where hand-raising before speaking was required as a social norm in the classroom. S25 wrote, "Americans are taught to *jump right in* (S25's emphasis) and speak quickly. Not only does that make it more difficult for non-native English speakers to speak, but cultural norms make it even more difficult to jump in" (S25QES: 2–6: RH). S25 also mentioned on the evaluation sheet for the class that "chatty Americans" (S25EVA: 15: RH) and Spanish speakers jumped into discussions.

Quantity

[5] "Overparticipation" is a kind of impoliteness. Please define "Overparticipation."
 [6] "*Thinking* about not talking too much" is a kind of politeness.
 [28] "Not answering questions (when the teacher asks to a whole class)" is a kind of impoliteness.

The quantity is the amount of time (length and frequency) the students talk in the classroom, covering SSs [5], [6] and [28]. SS [5], "Overparticipation," is included here because it generally means talking too much. In connection with SS [5], SS [6], "*Thinking* about not talking too much," describes a mental activity of thinking to avoid overparticipation. [28] implies lack of participation.

SS [5]: "Overparticipation" is a kind of impoliteness. Please define
"Overparticipation."

The overall consensus is that overparticipation is impolite to the other students. Overparticipation was generally defined as talking too much, indicating both length of time and number of turns. The concept of "talking too much" cannot

be precisely defined because it changes situationally. The following dialogue, through verbatim quotations derived from individual interviews, reconstructs the way S5 behaved in this classroom.

S16: "She [S5] talks a lot as if she is the only person in the class."

(S16INT1: 5–6: OD)

S8: Do you [S5] "feel like you have to say something about every point brought up"?

(S8INT2: 105: OD)

S5: Excuse me, "in my [S5] culture, you are not supposed to keep quiet....

We don't tolerate the moment of silence." (S5INT2: 63–64: CB)

Sixteen participants (15 students and Prof. Z) expressed their opinion that overparticipation is a kind of impoliteness to the other students because it does not allow them to "share the chance to talk" (S14INT2: 56: OD). However, there is considerably more to it. With overparticipation — a main source of impoliteness to the other students — come egocentricity and control, carrying with them negative connotations. When they talk, overparticipants seem to think that they are "the center of the whole world" (S33INT2: 34: OD) and not to "care about other people" (S21INT2: 23: OD). S4, S6 and S9 made perceptive comments on "control"; overparticipation involves the positional shift of control from the teacher to the students. "In the classroom, the teacher should be the person who guides the class, controls the class" (S9INT2: 32–33: TC), but students take this role when they overparticipate. In this sense, S4 was somewhat critical of S5, who "ask(ed) questions to other people as if she [S5] (was) conducting the class" (S4INT2: 54–55: OD). However, Prof. Z's perception about S5 was different.

I [Prof. Z] think she [S5] is a person who attends to courses and really puts herself into them.... She [S5] is a kind of second leader in the class after myself or even before myself. She kind of rallies people's comments around her. There's a lot of dialogue between not just me and her, but across students. (Z5: 91-92 & 116-119: CC)

While the concept of overparticipation refers specifically to time-length and frequency of turn, it lives in the world of perception rather than the physical world. As a consequence, the concept differs between the students and Prof. Z when it comes to who overparticipated in the class. S2, S5, S8, S16 and S24 perceived that S5, S8, S24 and S32 overparticipated because of the time-length and frequency of their speaking turns. Interestingly enough, three of them (i.e., S5, S8 and S24) perceived themselves as overparticipants. And yet, Prof. Z perceived that no students overparticipated "because my [Prof. Z] objective was to get people to talk" (Z6: 40-41: OD).

Not only does the concept differ between the students and Prof. Z, it also becomes blurred in the classroom because overparticipation is dynamic and context-bound. S24 mentioned that S5 talks a lot, but "she tends to raise really good points So in that way I [S24] don't think S5 is overparticipating" (S24INT2: 85-86: OD). In this view, S5 was quantitatively violating S24's idea of politeness about class participation, but S5 was qualitatively contributing to the class. Equally, S24 and S26 felt that even if a student talked too much, it should not be regarded as overparticipation in specific cases. S24 commented that "sometimes people don't reply to (the) instructor's question. In that sense, you know, hey, if other people are

not responding to that, I'll take that responsibility" (S24INT2: 87–89: OD). This is not impolite; rather, it is acceptable and polite.

Demeanor

[4] "Asking questions to which the answers are obvious" is a kind of impoliteness.

[10] "Not offending a certain culture or person in the class" is a kind of politeness.

[11] A student gave an incorrect or irrelevant answer and the instructor responded by saying, "That's interesting" or "Could be" instead of "That's incorrect" or "That's irrelevant." This is a kind of politeness.

[12] "Talking privately with your friends while someone is talking" is a kind of impoliteness.

[20] "Active listening" is a kind of politeness. Please define "Active listening."

[21] "Having non-verbal communication (eye contact, smiling, nodding)" is a kind of politeness.

[34] "Expressing appreciation of others' feedback to my opinions" is a kind of politeness.

Demeanor refers to the teacher's and the students' acts during dynamic, interdependent, and negotiating processes of communication. This category is more inclusive than Turn-Taking and Quantity because Demeanor deals with the ways the teacher and the students interact and negotiate among themselves in the classroom. Demeanor includes offending a certain culture or person, private conversation among students, active listening, asking and answering questions, and having non-verbal communication (eye contact, smiling, nodding, etc.). Demeanor covers SSs [4], [10], [11], [12], [20], [21] and [34]. SS [4] is mainly concerned with how

students behave towards the teacher. On the other hand, SS [11] is concerned with how the teacher behaves towards the students. SSs [10] and [12] are primarily verbal processes involving triadic relationship (the teacher and the students themselves). On the other hand, SSs [20] [21] and [34] are primarily non-verbal processes involving triadic relationship.

SS [12]: "Talking privately with your friends while someone is talking" is a kind of impoliteness.

This study suggests that talking privately with your friends is impolite to others, particularly to the speaker and the instructor. The classroom anecdote, entitled "This is private!" helps to explain SS [12].

This is private! (S7 and S24)

In the seventh session, S3, sitting in the front row, raised his right hand to the height of his head. Prof. Z, who sits nearby face to face with S3, pointed at him without saying anything. S3 began talking, "Ah, when S18 said that sometimes it's kind of insulting to people, people's free will, you know, ..." S3 talked for 33 seconds. In the meantime, S24 and S7, sitting next to each other beside the wall, started talking to each other. S24 talked while S7 put her head down and listened to S24 for 18 seconds. S7 then put her head up and started talking back to S24. This private talk continued for 33 seconds, exactly paralleling S3's talk, until S8 raised her right hand just after S3 finished talking.

Private talking is impolite because instructors and students should listen to others even if what they are saying is boring. S7 told me confidently, "S24 and myself [S7] share conversation all the time, but it's just clarifying points" (S7FGI1: 41–42: TP). S24 agreed that private talk is generally impolite, but "sometimes

private talk is related to the discussion and sometimes (the) person may not feel (it is) worth discussing" (S24INT2: 233–234: TP). Certainly, S7 and S24 have a point. However, students can justify their actions by sharing their private comments with the rest of the class. Prof. Z is aware of this perspective and is clever in finding out if students are on topic or engaged in private conversation.

Often what I [Prof. Z] do personally is I call on them [students] and say, "Would you like to share this in class." I can immediately tell from their reactions that they are ready to respond. Then, that was something that probably should have been said. If they are not ready to respond, they get sort of almost an embarrassed look on their face. Then it's a message, that's inappropriate. (Z6: 311–316: TP)

Yet all private talk in the classroom should not simply be labeled impolite. S12 and S13 talked about a common experience when they felt trapped by chatty S32.

S12: S32 sits beside me. When Prof. Z is talking, ... she [S32] tries to talk to me while Prof. Z tries to clarify the points Prof. Z is making.

S13: I was caught on that.

S12: Yeah.

S13: She [S32] talks to me, I feel I have to talk back, even though I also feel that we shouldn't be talking when Prof. Z is talking. I know as a teacher it drives me crazy. That's what my students do. So you feel kind of trapped between.

S12: You want to be nice. You want to be friendly. (FGI1: 29–39: TP)

S13 was sandwiched between impoliteness to Prof. Z and politeness to S32.

Although private talk is impolite, it sometimes occurs even if some students intend to be polite to the instructor.

Infrastructural Dynamics

For analytical purposes, I categorized the statements according to their principal issues. Themes then emerged. Yet the realities are much more complex than this mechanistic categorization. The judgment of politeness that the teacher and the students make usually involves more than one of the seven ISs. The thrust of the argument in this paper is that individuals prioritize one of the seven ISs in judging the degree of politeness of various classroom incidents. Prioritization means the processes that participants use to rationalize their judgments about the (im)politeness of classroom incidents. In so doing, they select a primary reason that is reflected in one of the seven concepts. This process has implications of both conscious and unconscious operations. The process involved in making such judgments is called *infrastructural dynamics*. The infrastructural dynamics do not predict how and to what degree people perceive classroom incidents as polite or impolite; instead, they are an interpretive tool for their perceptions about classroom incidents. No picture of politeness in this multicultural classroom can be considered complete and final without these seven components.

Individuals carry with them personal sets of ISs, which may be structurally similar, functionally comparable, qualitatively various and contextually specific. Personal sets of ISs are structurally similar because they have seven ISs. The sets of ISs are functionally comparable because individuals prioritize one of the seven ISs in judging politeness in classroom incidents. Although individuals choose from

these seven ISs, personal sets of ISs vary qualitatively because individuals' concepts of these seven ISs may vary due to their cultural socialization and personal experiences. The personal sets are also contextually specific because the dynamics of the ISs change according to specific classroom incidents.

The following section will explain how the participants interpreted SSs [25], [9], [14], [18], [1], [5] and [12] through the infrastructural dynamics.

Explaining the Various SSs through the Infrastructural Dynamics

SS [25]: "Taking an active part in the conversation (classroom discussion) is being polite (to Prof. Z) as compared to sitting there and saying nothing"
(S15QUE: 9–10: CC).

Regarding SS [25], S16 gave priority to Authority, remarking that "It's being polite because it's doing what Dr. Z has asked. It's fulfilling her request.... She [Dr. Z] wants us to talk" (S16INT2: 20–24: CP).

While S16 prioritized Authority, S6 emphasized Contribution. S6 said, "If you say (this is) being polite to Dr. Z, (then, it) sounds like to me we are participating (in) the conversation for her [Dr. Z], but we are participating (in) the conversation for ourselves to gain our knowledge, you know, or express our ideas" (S6INT2: 20–23: CK).

S10 also stressed Contribution through Authority. S10 implied that Prof. Z tried to let the students talk so that they could contribute in class. S10 perceived that some people talked for the sake of talking "because there (was) so much pressure to speak" (S10FGI1: 133: CP) in the classroom.

Both Demeanor and Contribution concerned S1, who remarked, "Ah, I [S1] think you can take an active part in a conversation by not saying anything"

(S1INT2: 27–28: CP), but by nodding, showing facial expressions, and by active listening. S1 thought that non-verbal communication such as nodding, showing facial expressions, and active listening, is an important part of communicative processes, and also part of contribution in the classroom.

Opposed to this view, S11 and S22 regarded classroom exchanges as a two-way interactive process: "By being active, you share your knowledge and opinions.... You are giving and also receiving" (S11INT2: 27–28: CC). Although S1 and S11 prioritized Contribution, they had different concepts of Contribution. S1 had non-verbal communication in the classroom as part of concept of Contribution. S11, on the other hand, stressed verbal contribution in the classroom.

SS [9]: "Talking about personal experiences" is a kind of impoliteness.

When students talked about their personal experiences, listeners prioritized Relevance in determining if the incident was polite or not. S16 complained that S5 talked about a personal experience which was irrelevant to the topic in question. S27 similarly observed the irrelevance of the topic when S32 and S5 talked about their personal experiences.

SS [14]: "A student has been talking too long and the instructor stops the student's talking explicitly." This is a kind of politeness.

The way S14 behaved created an incident that included Demeanor, Quantity, Authority, Relevance and Contribution. Many students perceived that S14's talk was too long and irrelevant. Thus, Quantity and Relevance were used to determine the impoliteness of this incident. Prof. Z was in a conflict between Demeanor and Authority in the infrastructural dynamics: "I [Prof. Z] remember sitting on the edge of my seat, kind of trying to figure out a way to take a turn because she [S14] was

losing the rest of the class. The points were no longer being assimilated or listened to" (Z3: 4–7: OD). In this case, she prioritized Demeanor over Authority or Contribution. Prof. Z thought that she should not interrupt when S14 was talking. Prof. Z valued this specific norm more than stopping S14 by exercising her Authority or thinking about Contribution for the whole class.

S13 stated that Prof. Z was not in a position to interrupt S14 because she was encouraging everybody to contribute to the class. S13 implied Contribution. Although S13 is right in saying that Prof. Z prioritized Contribution in this particular incident, Prof. Z knew that S14's talk was not contributing to the class. In spite of this, Prof. Z did not employ Authority for the sake of Contribution; she just let S14 keep talking because Prof. Z prioritized Demeanor. Prof. Z valued a norm in Demeanor that she should not interrupt S14.

However, Prof. Z alone was in a position to interrupt S14 by exercising her Authority. S13 acknowledges this power: "You hope that (the) teacher is being a mediator of the whole thing" (S13FGI1: 167: TC). Students could also implicitly or explicitly urge the instructor to employ Authority. This means that instructors may employ Authority for the sake of Contribution. S24 commented on this issue: "I'm not going to raise my hand and say, 'Excuse me I'm tired of this discussion.' The teacher can say that. O. K. Let's move on" (S24INT2: 28–30: CM). S24 means that he is not in a position to employ Authority but that the teacher is in the position, and Prof. Z can say, "O. K. Let's move on" (S24INT2: 30: CM) in order to ensure more class discussion.

SS [18]: "Avoiding disagreements with instructors" is a kind of politeness.

"Avoiding disagreements with other students" focuses on the issues of Demeanor and Contribution. Agreements and disagreements with other students are concerned with the negotiating processes in discussion-type classes. Disagreements often lead to the construction of knowledge. Similarly, "Avoiding disagreements with instructors" involves the issues of Mind and Contribution because disagreements with instructors imply challenging his or her knowledge or critical mind and often lead to the construction of knowledge.

S9 said, "Avoiding disagreements is not (the) right attitude towards learning" (S9INT2: 28–29: DIS). S9 prioritized Contribution over Demeanor or Mind in judging politeness. S9 thinks that even if she disagree with other students or challenge the teacher's knowledge or critical mind, it would contribute to the construction of knowledge. Likewise, S24 prioritized Contribution: "I [S24] try to avoid emotional antagonism" (S24INT2: 42: DIS). Unlike rational disagreements, emotional antagonism does not contribute to the class.

SS [1]: "Not raising one's hand to say something in class" is a kind of impoliteness.

The infrastructural dynamic of this behavior — raising one's hand to say something in class — is a primary issue in Turn-Taking and Contribution. S24 gave priority to Turn-Taking among the seven infrastructures; raising one's hand is his way of showing "courtesy" (S24INT1: 109: RH) to other students. S5, on the other hand, prioritized Contribution: "to be polite is to show myself [S5] in terms of what the others have spoken" (S5INT1: 171–172: RH).

This contrast in priorities between S24 and S5 illustrates the discrepancy in judging politeness in the classroom. In whatever classroom incidents that are embedded in the infrastructures of Turn-Taking and Contribution, S24 tends to give

priority to Turn-Taking over Contribution, while S5 tends to prioritize Contribution over Turn-Taking in judging politeness in the classroom. The teacher and the students in this multicultural classroom judge politeness according to their own definition of politeness. S24 and S5 have different concept of politeness, even though both of them may have seven aspects of politeness. According to their own definitions of politeness, S24 and S5 judge politeness in classroom incidents.

Prof. Z placed priority on Contribution over Turn-Taking by using her Authority. She mentioned that the students may see her as "controlling" (Z2: 173: RH) or as if she was running the discussions. She is aware of her Authority. For this reason, she explicitly used her Authority to set a norm, saying that anyone can jump into discussions. Here, the issue of Turn-Taking is involved. By temporarily exercising Authority, Prof. Z attempted to diminish Authority in the long run. Therefore, Prof. Z prioritized Contribution over Turn-Taking.

Despite Prof. Z's attempt to establish a norm of Turn-Taking for the class by verbally expressing her idea that the students can jump into discussions, S19 and S6 prioritized Turn-Taking over Contribution and Authority. Since the value that individuals place on politeness is contextually flexible, instructors may be able to affect it. Even so, instructors cannot drastically change what they value as polite because their values are well-established products of their personal experiences and cultural socialization.

Individuals prioritize one of the seven ISs, based on their experience and socialization. Although politeness issues appear messy, chaotic and fragmented at the superstructural level, the pattern behind the SS in the infrastructural dynamics is rather simple and apparent.

SS [5]: "Overparticipation" is a kind of impoliteness. Please define "Overparticipation."

While this is mainly an issue of Quantity, S4, S6 and S9 gave priority to Authority. For instance, S9 was concerned about the teacher's power with the remark: "In the classroom, (the) teacher should be the person who guides the class, controls the class" (S9INT2: 32–33: TC), but students take over this role when they overparticipate.

In contrast, Prof. Z gave priority to Contribution. She complimented S5: "I [Prof. Z] think she [S5] is a person who attends to courses and really puts herself into them" (Z5: 91–92: CC). Likewise, S24 prioritized Contribution over Quantity. S24 said that S5 talks a lot, but "she tends to raise really good points So in that way I [S24] don't think (S5) is overparticipating" (S24INT2: 85–86: OD).

SS [12]: "Talking privately with your friends while someone is talking" is a kind of impoliteness.

This SS is usually embedded in Demeanor. S24 and S7 often shared private conversations in the classroom, and their behavior was usually considered impolite. Yet the infrastructural dynamics situationally change. Prof. Z often attempts to find out if the students are on topic or engaged in private conversation by asking, "Would you like to share this in class?" (Z6: 312: TP). Here, she asserts her Authority. Then, if the students share private conversations about academic content with their classmates, Prof. Z and other classmates give priority to Contribution or Relevance in judging the politeness of this type of interaction. When S13 felt trapped by chatty S32 while Prof. Z was talking, Demeanor and Authority were competing with each other in S13's conception. In other words, S13 was in conflict;

when Demeanor takes precedence, she should talk to S32, whereas when Authority takes priority, S13 should not talk to S32.

7. Conclusion

Currently, we tend to understand students' interactions in the multicultural classroom according to cultural traits like their nationality or ethnicity, knowing that we should not stereotype them. We tend to think that they interact with themselves similarly or differently from other nationalities or ethnicities because of their cultural socialization. For example, Asians speak and self-initiate less frequently than non-Asians do (Sato, 1990). However, when we find some students who do not fit into this mental categorization in some classrooms, we simply treat them as exceptions. Disregarding the dynamics of human agent, situations and social interactions, the constructs of students' nationality or ethnicity are static and therefore, inadequate to explain the ways the students interact among themselves. Consider, for instance, a hypothetical case in which three students who have the same nationality in a multicultural classroom behave differently. Although cultural socialization plays an important role in shaping the ways students behave in the classroom, the construct of nationality is not a satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon.

A better construct to explain this phenomenon is the infrastructural dynamics. The infrastructural dynamics have more explanatory power than the constructs of nationality or ethnicity have. The infrastructural dynamics claim that seven ISs for the three students in this case are qualitatively different, and the ways they give priority to one of these ISs differ as well. Individual's applications of the seven concepts made a difference in the ways the students interpreted classroom incidents, interacted among themselves, behaved towards the teacher, and learned in the

classroom. Prof. Z's seven concepts also determined the ways she interpreted classroom incidents, shaped the ways she interacted with the students, and influenced the way she taught in the class. For example, the teachers' and the students' various concepts of Quantity, Authority, and Contribution, and their interactions, influenced the ways they interpreted overparticipation as well as the ways they participated in classroom discussions.

This argument, however, does not claim that the infrastructural dynamics can completely explain the ways the teacher and the students in this multicultural classroom behaved. The infrastructural dynamics are primarily concerned with the ways they interpreted classroom incidents when it comes to politeness. Yet certain connections exist between the ways they interpret classroom occurrences and the ways they behave in the classroom. The ways the participants interpret classroom incidents are firm bases of the ways they behave in the classroom, although the latter does not necessarily follow the former. The ways we behave involve many complex factors that are situationally-embedded. No single set of propositions is, therefore, adequate to explain human behaviors.

In addition, I deliberately gave loose definitions to the seven ISs. This was because of my consideration for the contextual richness of various pedagogical settings and further research. Politeness is not only cultural-specific, but also a dynamic concept that is open to change in any group, age and time (Watts, Ide, & Ehlich, 1992). Conceptions of the seven ISs can vary culturally, personally, situationally and temporally. Consider, for example, the concept of Authority, which can differ culturally. Although teachers are institutionally endowed with power, different types of cultural socialization can create a variety of conceptualizations of

Authority and can result in different student behaviors towards teachers. The concept of Authority in countries where an authoritative teaching approach is prevalent is different from its concept in countries where discussion-style classes are the primary mode of instruction.

Like cultural background, personal values can also influence students' understanding of the ISs. For example, with regard to Contribution, S33 said that she contributed to the class "very much" (S33: 5: CC) because she listened to Prof. Z's and the other students' opinions "very well and very carefully" (S33: 7–8: CC). For her, Contribution means listening to the teacher and other students. On the other hand, S26 viewed contributions to the class as a way to show his critical mind to the class: to reveal some of the "hidden assumptions," to draw on to some "underlying theoretical" foundations, to ask about some of the "ramifications," to point out some weaknesses of the arguments, and to express his disagreement with what is written in textbooks (S26INT1: 135–138 & 151–155: CC). S26 has a much broader view of Contribution. Individual concepts of Relevance in this multicultural classroom also vary. For example, S5 often shared her personal experiences, but many of the students occasionally perceived them as irrelevant, probably due to their personal values.

Janney and Arndt (1993) provide a caveat in cross-cultural politeness research. They argue that a problem arises whenever we "begin making general comparative statements about terms like 'politeness,' 'face,' 'directness,' etc., across languages and cultures" (p. 37). Such terms, once decontextualized from their original cultural settings, have different cultural interpretations. Those terms are properly understood from only one cultural viewpoint at a given time. Thus, it is

critical to know the ways these terms are defined in a particular culture and to examine where these terms fit into the cultural frameworks. Janney and Arndt suggest that researchers should acknowledge the significance of unique cultural identity, admit researchers' own cultural limitations as observers and interpreters, and take flexible approaches in dealing with cultural variation. Taking Janney and Arndt's (1993) recommendation into consideration, I gave loose definitions to the seven concepts in this study.

Finally, it is worthwhile mentioning Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. He claimed that maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner are "over-arching assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation" (Levinson, 1983, p. 101). Grice did not explicitly claim universality for the Cooperative Principle. Indeed, the value of the Principle is not in showing that it tightly regulates discourse, but in showing how we employ its maxims in "*interpreting the meaning*" of discourse (Nofsinger, 1991). Grice did not present the Principle as a theory of politeness, either. He simply claims that, in addition to the four maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner), another maxim exists: "Be polite." Yet two ISs in this study overlap with Grice's maxims; the propositions of "Do not talk too much" and "Be relevant" in the Cooperative Principle overlap with two ISs identified here, Quantity and Relevance.

Undoubtedly value-laden, concepts of politeness exist in a world of perception and have both common and idiosyncratic features for each individual. The set of ISs — knowledge of politeness in this multicultural classroom — is a sociohistorical construction, tightly connected with place and time. This knowledge of politeness was derived from a case study undertaken at a particular time; thus, it is partial and situated knowledge.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professors Victoria Berkemeyer, James Pearsol, Robert Donmoyer, Charles Hancock, Lee Wilbershied, and Diana Eades.

Footnotes

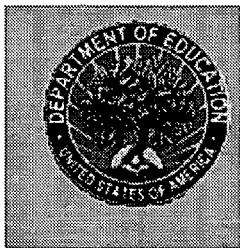
¹ This three-credit course, *Language Planning* focused on the politics, history and sociology relating to language issues worldwide. The course objectives were: to gain international perspectives on language issues; to analyze the global role of English as an international language; and to collect media sources in order to become familiar with public perceptions of second languages. The textbooks for the course were Ashworth (1985), Cooper (1989) and Phillipson (1992).

² The use of politeness or impoliteness as a cover term was not a concern because the interviewees could either agree or disagree with the statement. For instance, the use of *a kind of politeness* is tentative in the statement, "Not to correct teachers' mistakes during classroom interactions is a kind of politeness."

³ This study focuses on the "What" of (im)politeness instead of the "How" of (im)politeness. In other words, this study considers things people do or say in the classroom, disregarding the ways they do or say. In addition, we often refer to persons as polite or impolite; however, it is more appropriate to state that the way persons behave in specific situations is considered polite or impolite. Given this holistic and contextual interpretation of politeness in the classroom, the word *incidents* is employed instead of persons.

⁴ A “Please define ...” statement sometimes comes with an Informant-Expressed Semantic Relationship statement because I asked the participants to define a concept contained in the Semantic Relationship statement.

⁵ The following section extensively employs verbatim quotations, complete with stumbles and stammers, to give credit to the participants, along with file codes in parentheses, such as (S24INT1: 108–109: RH) and (Z6: 40–41: OD). The first code indicates the participants, like S24 or Prof. Z, followed by the methodologies: INT = Interviews, QUE = Questionnaire, EVA = Evaluation Sheets, FGI = The Focus Group Interviews, REA = Reaction Paper, REF = Self-Reflection Questionnaire. Prof. Z's verbatim quotations are always from the six interviews. The numbers in the middle section reveal the line numbers of the transcript, and the final symbols, such as RH (Raising one's hand) or OD (Overdominance), indicate the coding categories used for data reduction and analysis. Additionally, parentheses in verbatim quotations indicate my editing.



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